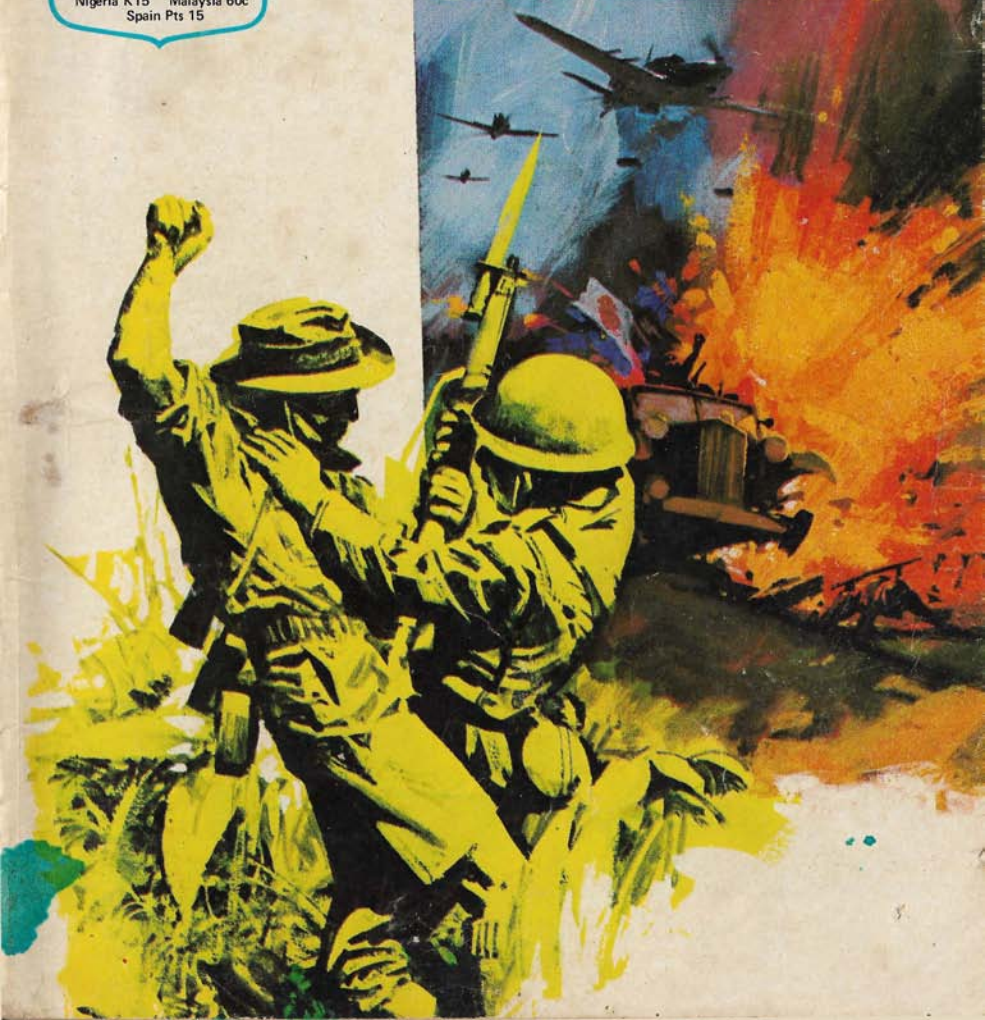


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**NO HIGHER  
STAKES**



**ALSO ON SALE NOW**

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**8 Terrific Issues Every Month**

# NO HIGHER STAKES

CHESS IS THE OLDEST GAME IN THE WORLD AND ON THE SQUARED BOARD, WAR IS WAGED WITH HARD, MERCILESS LOGIC. BUT THERE WERE THOSE WHO TREATED WAR AS A GAME OF CHESS AND SOLDIERS AS PIECES OF THAT GAME, EXPENDABLE IN THE CAUSE OF VICTORY.

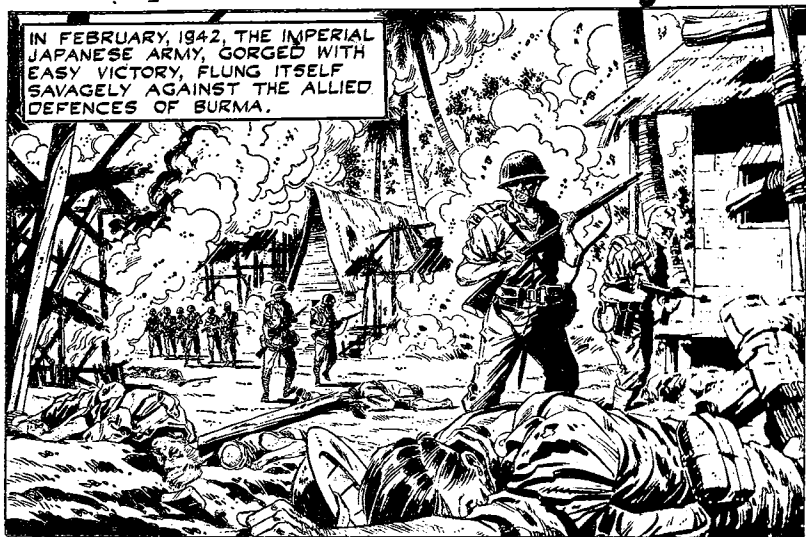
SUCH A MAN WAS GENERAL HORIKOSHI OF THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL ARMY.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED JANUARY 1963

No Higher Stakes

## Chapter 1. *The Chess Player*

IN FEBRUARY, 1942, THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY, GORGED WITH EASY VICTORY, FLUNG ITSELF SAVAGELY AGAINST THE ALLIED DEFENCES OF BURMA.



IN COMMAND OF THE ENEMY INVASION, GENERAL HORIKOSHI IMPATIENTLY LISTENED TO THE RESPECTFUL OBJECTIONS OF HIS AIDE, MAJOR KONDO . . .

BUT, EXCELLENCY, IT IS NOT WISE FOR YOU TO BE SO NEAR TO THE FRONT. IF THE BRITISH SHOULD MAKE A SUDDEN COUNTER-ATTACK. . .



ENOUGH, KONDO! YOU WEARY ME WITH YOUR BABBLE! A SAMURAI DOES NOT SKULK IN HIDING AS IF HE WERE AFRAID OF DANGER - OR OF DEATH!

## No Higher Stakes

5

KONDO BOWED, RECOGNISING THE OTHER'S FIERCE PRIDE, THEN LEANED FORWARD AS THE GENERAL BEGAN TO PLAN THE NEXT MOVE IN THE ADVANCE.

THE PIECES ARE SET ACCORDING TO THE LATEST REPORTS, GENERAL SAN.

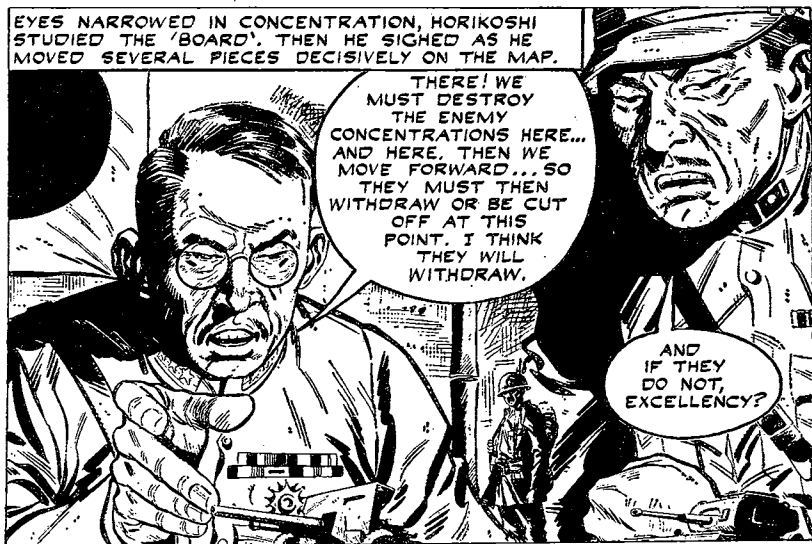
THAT IS WELL, NOW, ALL WE MUST DO, IS TO COUNTER THEIR MOVES AND THRUST HOME OUR OWN ATTACK. NOW, LET ME SEE...



EYES NARROWED IN CONCENTRATION, HORIKOSHI STUDIED THE 'BOARD'. THEN HE SIGHED AS HE MOVED SEVERAL PIECES DECISIVELY ON THE MAP.

THERE! WE MUST DESTROY THE ENEMY CONCENTRATIONS HERE... AND HERE. THEN WE MOVE FORWARD... SO THEY MUST THEN WITHDRAW OR BE CUT OFF AT THIS POINT. I THINK THEY WILL WITHDRAW.

AND IF THEY DO NOT, EXCELLENCY?



## No Higher Stakes

HORIKOSHI SMILED PATIENTLY AS HE FOLLOWED KONDO TOWARDS THE DOOR.

THEN THE GAME CONTINUES, MAJOR. WE HAVE BROKEN THEIR DEFENCE AND THEN WE MOVE TO DESTROY THEM. IF THEY PLAY WELL IT WILL TAKE A LITTLE LONGER THAN IF THEY PLAY POORLY, THAT IS ALL.

I UNDERSTAND, EXCELLENCY. I WILL IMPLEMENT YOUR ORDERS.

TO HORIKOSHI, FANATICALLY DEVOTED TO CHESS, WAR WAS AN IMPERSONAL THING, BUT NOT TO THE MEN WHO WERE THE 'PIECES' ON HIS 'BOARD'.



## No Higher Stakes

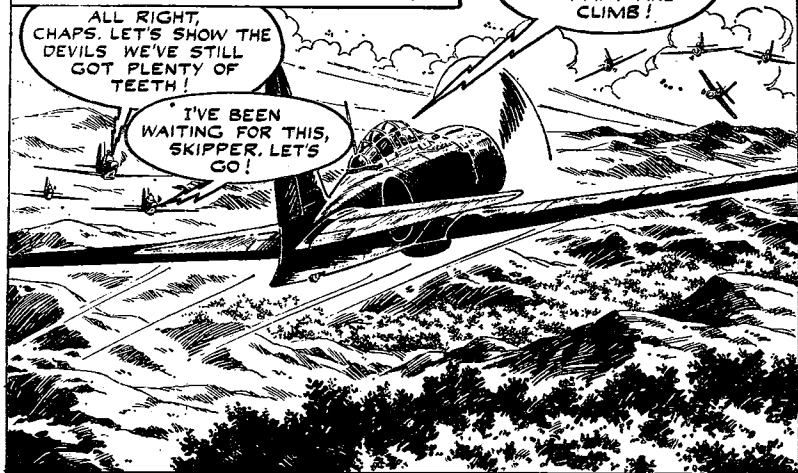
7

NOR WAS IT A ONE-SIDED GAME. LOSSES WOULD BE TAKEN BY BOTH CONTESTANTS BEFORE THE FINAL VICTORY WAS WON.

ALL RIGHT, CHAPS. LET'S SHOW THE DEVILS WE'VE STILL GOT PLENTY OF TEETH!

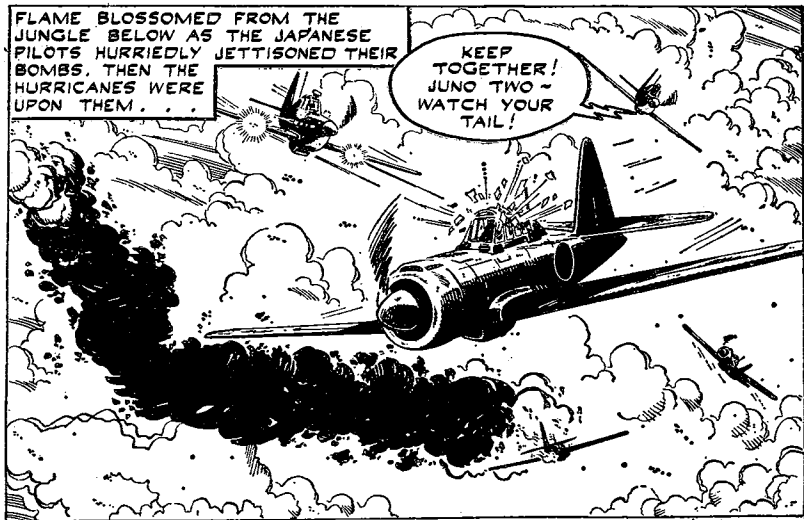
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS, SKIPPER. LET'S GO!

ALL UNITS. LIGHTEN CRAFT AND CLIMB!



FLAME BLOSSOMED FROM THE JUNGLE BELOW AS THE JAPANESE PILOTS HURRIEDLY JETTISONED THEIR BOMBS. THEN THE HURRICANES WERE UPON THEM.

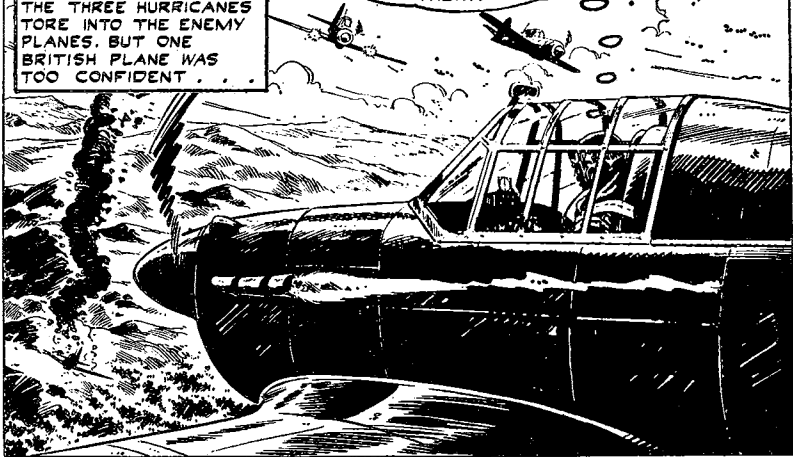
KEEP TOGETHER! JUNG TWO - WATCH YOUR TAIL!



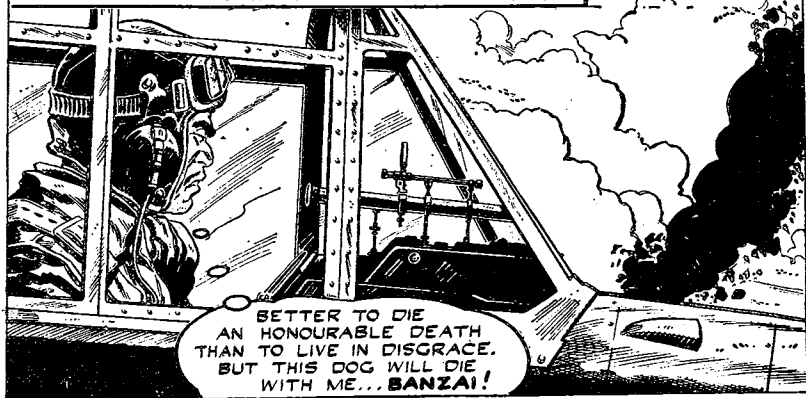
## No Higher Stakes

ENGINES SCREAMING AT FULL BOOST AND THEIR EIGHT BROWNING CLATTERING VICIOUSLY, THE THREE HURRICANES TORE INTO THE ENEMY PLANES. BUT ONE BRITISH PLANE WAS TOO CONFIDENT . . .

GOOD GRIEF!  
THEY'VE GOT JOE! THAT  
LEAVES TWO OF US  
TO FIVE OF  
THEM!



THE PLANES WHEELED AND DIVED, LEAVING WHITE VAPOUR TRAILS INTERWOVEN IN THE DEEP BLUE SKY. FOUR OF THE ENEMY SPIRALLED EARTHWARDS FOR THE LOSS OF ANOTHER BRITISH FIGHTER. LIPS DRAWN BACK IN A SNARL, THE SURVIVING JAP FLUNG HIS HEAVY MITSUBISHI TOWARDS THE LAST HURRICANE . . .



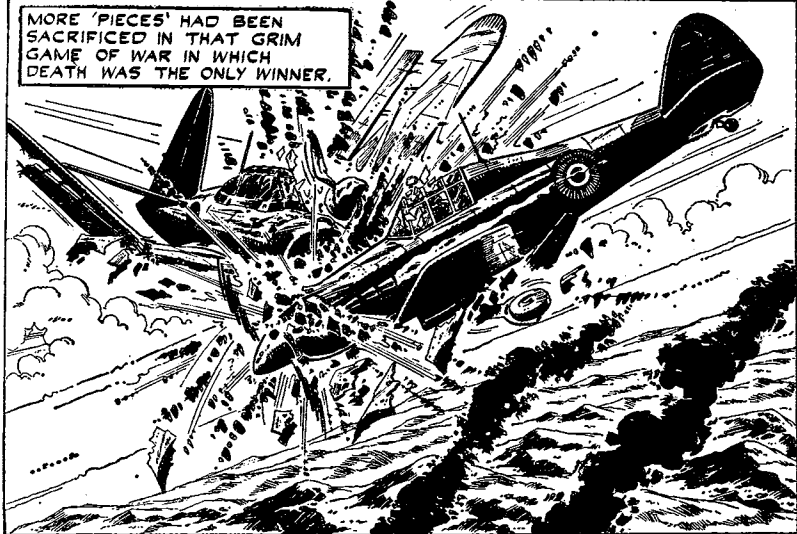
BETTER TO DIE  
AN HONOURABLE DEATH  
THAN TO LIVE IN DISGRACE.  
BUT THIS DOG WILL DIE  
WITH ME... **BANZAI!**



## No Higher Stakes

9

MORE 'PIECES' HAD BEEN SACRIFICED IN THAT GRIM GAME OF WAR IN WHICH DEATH WAS THE ONLY WINNER.



IN THE JUNGLE, TOO, THE 'PAWNS' OF HORIKOSHI'S CHESSBOARD FOUGHT AND DIED THAT A 'MOVE' SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. . . .

ON! KILL  
KILL! FOR THE  
EMPEROR!

CAPTAIN  
SAN, WE  
ARE LOSING  
TOO MANY  
MEN!



## No Higher Stakes

SNARLING WITH RAGE, THE JAPANESE OFFICER SPUN TO FACE THE SERGEANT, EYES GLOWING FANATICALLY.

IT IS THEIR HONOUR TO DIE FOR THEIR EMPEROR! WE WERE ORDERED TO TAKE THIS POSITION - AND WE WILL TAKE IT NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!

SO BE IT, CAPTAIN SAN!



HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED, THE BRITISH WERE OVERWHELMED AND THE JAPANESE SWARMED OVER THE HARD-WON GROUND.

LOOK FOR WATCHES, HOKI, AND THE LIKE. ALL ENGLISH CARRY THEM.

HURRY THERE! HURRY! THERE ARE MANY MORE ENEMIES OF THE EMPEROR FOR US TO DESTROY! THEN THERE WILL BE LOOT FOR ALL!



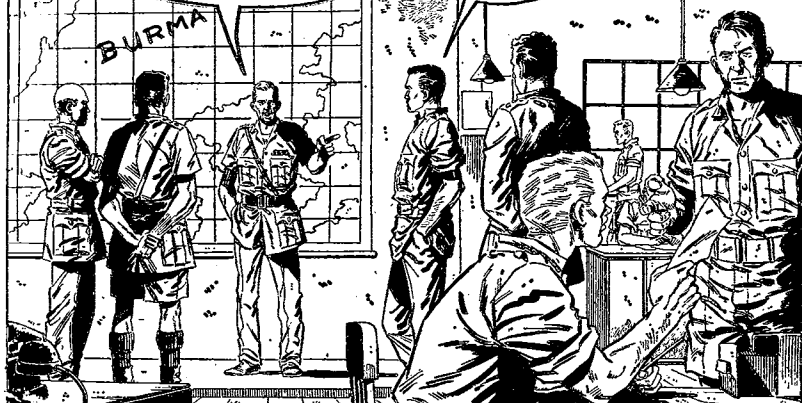
## No Higher Stakes

11

BACK IN BRITISH G.H.Q., GRIM FACES HARDENED INTO BLEAK RESIGNATION AS THE REPORTS FILTERED IN.

OUR DEFENCES ARE  
BROKEN ALL ALONG THE  
PERIMETER, I DOUBT IF  
THERE IS CLOSE CONTACT  
BETWEEN ANY GROUPS  
LARGER THAN  
COMPANIES.

WHAT  
IS TO BE  
DONE NOW,  
SIR?



BITTERLY, THE GENERAL PUT STARK REALITY INTO WORDS. . .

WITH OUR LINE SHATTERED AND  
COMMUNICATIONS ON THE VERGE OF  
CHAOS THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN  
DO IN BURMA AT THIS TIME. IF WE  
ARE TO SALVAGE ANYTHING  
FROM THIS MESS, WE MUST  
WITHDRAW.



## No Higher Stakes

HORIKOSHI WOULD HAVE CALLED IT 'RESIGNING' FROM THE GAME, TO THE WEARY MEN SLOGGING THROUGH THE JUNGLE IT WAS A TIME OF ENDLESS, NERVE-RACKING HARDSHIP ~ BUT IT MEANT A CHANCE TO LIVE ~ AND TO FIGHT AGAIN.



THE ENEMY WERE MERCILESSLY PURSUING THE BROKEN REMNANTS OF AN ARMY AND IT WAS ONLY THE REARGUARD THAT HELD THEM OFF.



## No Higher Stakes

13

THEY HAD ALL SEEN THE GRIM EVIDENCE OF JAPANESE CONQUEST AND NOT ONE MAN THOUGHT OF SURRENDER.

HERE THEY COME, LADS. RIGHT WITHIN EASY REACH!

COME ON, YOU SCUM! COME AND GET IT!



SCREAMING THEIR HATE, THE JAPANESE FLUNG THEMSELVES AGAINST THE DOGGED RESISTANCE OF THE FEW SURVIVORS OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A PROUD BRITISH FORCE.

KILL!  
KILL! FOR THE  
EMPEROR!  
SANZAI!



## No Higher Stakes

THE ENEMY RANKS WERE DRASTICALLY THINNED BY THE BRITISH FIRE ~ BUT STILL THEY CHARGED FORWARD, THEN STEEL RASPED ON STEEL IN VICIOUS, HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.



HIS REVOLVER TAKING ITS TOLL OF THE ENEMY, CAPTAIN GRANT WAS TOO BUSY TO SPOT THE THREAT AT HIS BACK.



## No Higher Stakes

15



## No Higher Stakes

THE GHURKA DID NOT MISS, SHAKILY, GRANT CLIMBED TO HIS FEET.

THANKS, AGRA - I'LL NOT FORGET THAT! NOW - WE MUST DEPLOY AND LAUNCH A REAR ATTACK WHILE WE'RE STILL STRONG ENOUGH. HOLD ON HERE. I'M GOING TO FIND THE MAJOR.

BE QUICK, CAPTAIN - WE ARE HOLDING THEM, BUT ONLY JUST.

BUT WHEN GRANT TACKLED MAJOR OSBORNE, HE FOUND ONLY DOUBTS AND INDECISION.

NO, NO! IT WOULD MEAN WEAKENING OUR FORCES AND RELYING ON THE GHURKAS... I'M NOT TOO SURE THAT WE CAN TRUST THEM.

BUT THAT'S RIDICULOUS, SIR! EITHER WE ATTACK FROM THEIR REAR OR WE'LL BE OVERWHELMED... AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS!

PERHAPS IT WAS THE NAMELESS DREAD OF TORTURE THAT FORCED OSBORNE TO AGREE AND GRANT WAS QUICK TO SEIZE THE ADVANTAGE.

I'LL TAKE THE GHURKAS AND SERGEANT WEST'S PLATOON AND SWING TOWARDS THE ENEMY REAR. I'LL BE READY TO ATTACK IN AN HOUR.

V-VERY WELL, GRANT - WE'LL HOLD THEM UNTIL THEN.



## No Higher Stakes

17

LIKE BROWN SHADOWS, THE LITHE GHURKAS SLIPPED THROUGH THE JUNGLE SILENCING THE JAPANESE LOOKOUTS AS THEY WENT.



CROUCHED IN THE DIM-GREEN JUNGLE THEY WAITED TENSELY FOR THE SIGNAL TO ATTACK.



## No Higher Stakes

THE MINUTES DRAGGED BY~ AND THEN AGRA SLIPPED BACK INTO THEIR POSITION. . .

THE WAY IS CLEAR. MAJOR OSBORNE HAS LAUNCHED A COUNTER-ATTACK TO OCCUPY THEIR ATTENTION. IT IS TIME FOR US TO GO.

GOOD FOR THE MAJOR. WELL, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?



CAUTIOUSLY THEY CREPT FORWARD AND THEN, GUNS HAMMERING VENGEFULLY, THEY BURST ON THE JAPANESE REAR.

SWING TO THE LEFT, SERGEANT. WE'LL CUT THEM TO SHREDS WITH OUR CROSSFIRE.

TURN! FACE THE ENEMY AND DESTROY THEM!



## No Higher Stakes

19

STUNNED BY THE UNEXPECTED ATTACK, THE JAPANESE MILLED HELPLESSLY, ~ AND DIED WHERE THEY STOOD.



THERE WAS NO WITHSTANDING GRANT'S MERCILESS CROSSFIRE. . .



## No Higher Stakes

OSBORNE HAD ALREADY STARTED HIS ATTACK, SEEING THE OPPOSITION MELTING AWAY BEFORE IT, HE FLUNG HIS MEN FORWARD WITH RENEWED CONFIDENCE.

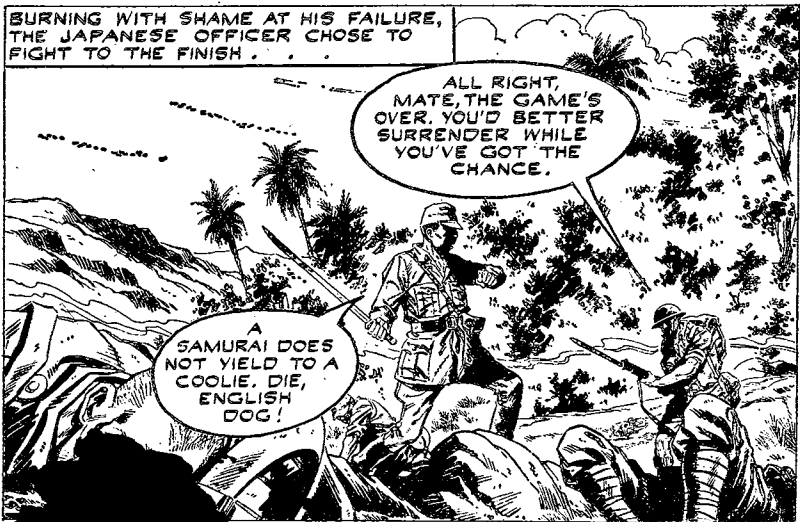
ATTACK!  
WE'VE GOT 'EM  
RUNNING!



BURNING WITH SHAME AT HIS FAILURE, THE JAPANESE OFFICER CHOSE TO FIGHT TO THE FINISH.

ALL RIGHT,  
MATE, THE GAME'S  
OVER. YOU'D BETTER  
SURRENDER WHILE  
YOU'VE GOT THE  
CHANCE.

A  
SAMURAI DOES  
NOT YIELD TO A  
COOLIE. DIE,  
ENGLISH  
DOG!



## No Higher Stakes

21

THE JAPANESE OFFICER SPRANG TOWARDS THE BRITISH SOLDIER LIKE A TIGER, HIS SWORD THRUST TREACHEROUSLY SWIFT, . .

SO  
DIE ALL...  
AIEE!

TAKE  
THAT, YOU  
MURDERING  
DEVIL!



OSBORNE'S SHOT CAME TOO LATE TO SAVE THE INFANTRYMAN. SLOWLY, THE MAJOR PICKED UP THE DEAD OFFICER'S SWORD, . .

I'M AFRAID WE'VE  
LOST QUITE A FEW MEN,  
SERGEANT!

JENKINS  
IS DEAD,  
SIR!

MAJOR  
OSBORNE!



## No Higher Stakes

RAPIDLY, GRANT GAVE HIS REPORT. THEY HAD, INDEED, SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES BUT THE COMPANY WAS STILL A FIGHTING FORCE.

ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN, I UNDERSTAND THE POSITION. NOW WE WILL RETREAT IN GOOD ORDER.

YES, SIR. BUT I WOULDN'T KEEP THAT SWORD IF I WERE YOU. THE JAPS HAVE A NASTY HABIT OF DEALING WITH SOUVENIR HUNTERS.

GRANT GAVE A WRY SMILE AS OSBORNE HASTILY FLUNG THE SWORD ASIDE.

I-I WAS SIMPLY LOOKING AT IT, GRANT. NOW THAT WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, YOU HAD BETTER WARN ALL THE MEN NOT TO TAKE ANY JAPANESE EQUIPMENT. . . WE DON'T WANT TO CARRY UNNECESSARY WEIGHT.

VERY GOOD, SIR!



## Chapter 2. *Fool's Gambit*

THEY HAD WON THE BATTLE BUT THERE WAS NO TIME TO CONGRATULATE THEMSELVES. IF THEY WERE TO ESCAPE, SPEED WAS ESSENTIAL.

DO YOU THINK IT WISE TO MARCH IN RIGID COLUMN, SIR. WE'D BE HELPLESS IF ATTACKED.

JUST BECAUSE WE ARE FIGHTING IN A JUNGLE, GRANT, DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO THROW AWAY ALL OUR TRAINING.

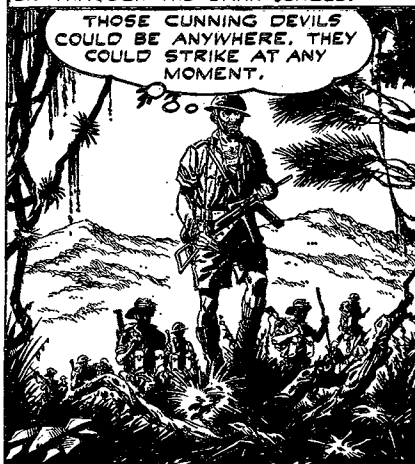
GRANT BIT HIS LIPS AT OSBORNE'S REPLY. NOW, MORE THAN EVER, HE REALISED THAT THE MAJOR WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF HIS DEPTH.

THIS IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF WAR TO WHAT YOU WERE TAUGHT, SIR. HERE WE HAVE TO THROW AWAY THE RULES AND MAKE OUR OWN.

I THINK NOT, CAPTAIN. NOW KEEP THEM MOVING!

## No Higher Stakes

OSBORNE'S ACID TONES COVERED A HIDDEN FEAR, A FEAR WHICH INCREASED AS THE COLUMN PUSHED ON THROUGH THE DANK JUNGLE.



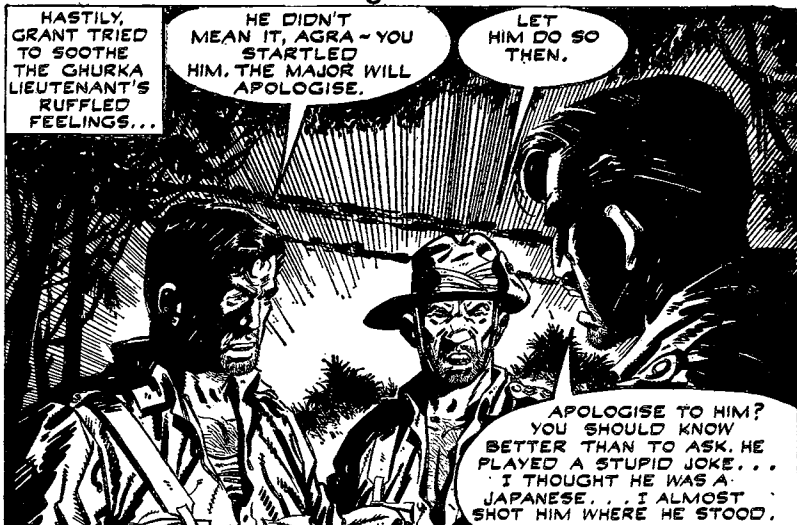
IT WAS A FEAR WHICH RODE WITH HIM ALL THAT DAY... TO EXPLODE IN SUDDEN FURY AS THE COLUMN RESTED UNEASILY THAT NIGHT.



ATTRACTED BY OSBORNE'S LOUD CRY, GRANT CAME RUNNING FORWARD, EYES BLAZING...







FUMING WITH INDIGNATION, LIEUTENANT AGRA STALKED INTO THE DARKNESS. GRANT TOOK A DEEP BREATH, FIGHTING TO CONTROL HIS OWN ANGER.

HE CAME TO REPORT SIGNS OF ENEMY ACTIVITY AHEAD. I'D BETTER TAKE A PATROL OUT IN THE MORNING OR WE MAY RUN INTO TROUBLE. IN THE MEANTIME, YOU'VE GOT TO APOLOGISE TO AGRA.

OH, DO AS YOU THINK BEST, GRANT. I THINK I'VE GOT A TOUCH OF MALARIA... I'D BETTER GET SOME REST.



## No Higher Stakes

OSBORNE WAS SICK, BUT WITH FEAR, NOT MALARIA. TIGHT-LIPPED, GRANT SOUGHT OUT THE GHURKA LIEUTENANT.

THE MAJOR IS SORRY FOR WHAT HE SAID, LIEUTENANT. . . .

DO NOT TROUBLE YOURSELF, CAPTAIN, I UNDERSTAND. NOW SIT AND LET US TALK OF WHAT MUST BE DONE TOMORROW.

THE DETAILS WERE SOON ARRANGED. AGRA NODDED AND THEN, CAREFULLY TESTING THE EDGE OF HIS KUKRI, DELIBERATELY NICKED HIS THUMB.

THAT'S AN ODD CUSTOM, AGRA, NEVER TO DRAW YOUR KNIFE OTHER THAN TO SHED BLOOD.

YOU, TOO, HAVE ODD CUSTOMS. THAT GAME YOU SO OFTEN PLAY WITH THE SQUARED BOARD AND NO OPPONENT . . . THE GAME OF WAR.

## No Higher Stakes

27

A KEEN CHESS PLAYER, GRANT OFTEN PLAYED NOTED GAMES ON HIS MINIATURE CHESS SET. SMILING, HE DREW IT FROM HIS POCKET.

YOU MEAN, CHESS, LIEUTENANT, IT'S A FASCINATING GAME. I USED TO BE RATHER GOOD ONCE.



GRANT WAS BEING MODEST. BEFORE THE TIDE OF WAR HAD DISRUPTED HIS LIFE, HE WAS WELL ON THE WAY TO BECOMING A MASTER PLAYER.

THE MIKALOV GAMBIT CAN ONLY WORK IF THE OPPONENT TAKES THE BISHOP AND ACCEPTS THE FEINT AS THE REAL ATTACK. NOW, IN THE MOSCOW CHAMPIONSHIPS, SPARSKI PROVED THAT. . .



## No Higher Stakes

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, ANOTHER CHESS PLAYER FROWNED IN CONCENTRATION OVER A SQUARED BOARD. MAJOR KONDO WAS FIGHTING A LOSING GAME WITH HIS GENERAL.



GENERAL HORIKOSHI  
TOOK NO PLEASURE IN  
HIS VICTORY. STEPPING  
TO THE OPEN DOOR,  
HE STARED INTO THE  
SULTRY, JUNGLE NIGHT.

AGAIN  
YOU HAVE WON,  
GENERAL. COULD  
YOU EVER BE  
BEATEN?

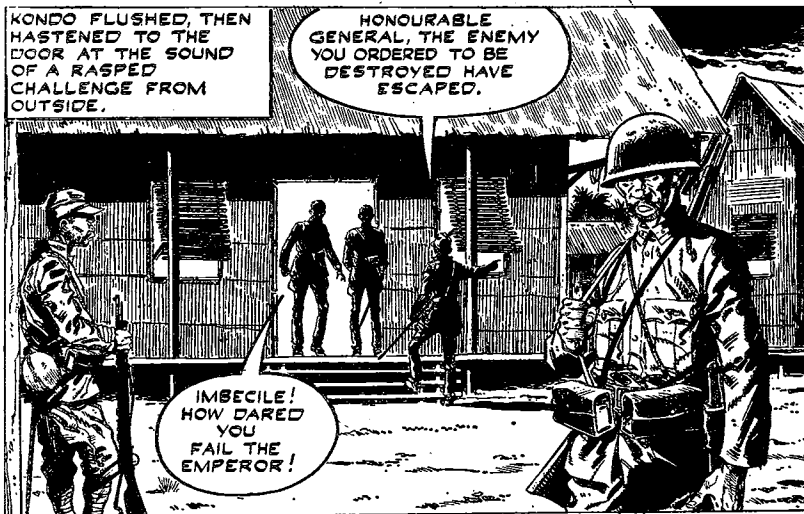
THERE ARE THOSE  
WHO COULD TEST MY SKILL.  
BUT WHERE, IN THIS  
JUNGLE, AM I TO FIND  
THEM? BY THE  
GODS, I GROW WEARY  
OF PLAYING WITH  
FOOLS!



KONDO FLUSHED, THEN  
HASTENED TO THE  
DOOR AT THE SOUND  
OF A RAPSED  
CHALLENGE FROM  
OUTSIDE.

HONOURABLE  
GENERAL, THE ENEMY  
YOU ORDERED TO BE  
DESTROYED HAVE  
ESCAPED.

IMBECILE!  
HOW DARED  
YOU  
FAIL THE  
EMPEROR!



## No Higher Stakes

BURNING WITH RAGE AND GLAD OF THE CHANCE TO VENT HIS OWN SECRET ANGER AT HIS EASY DEFEAT, KONDO STEPPED FORWARD, HIS HAND SWINGING IN A VICIOUS ARC.



FOR THREE DAYS, OSBORNE'S FORCE HAD FORGED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE JUNGLE WITH A PROBING PATROL OUT BEFORE THEM.



TIGHT-LIPPED, GRANT RASPED ORDERS TO THE TENSE PATROL...

MAJOR OSBORNE HAS TO BE WARNED. YOU WILL RETURN TO THE COLUMN, LIEUTENANT AGRA, AND DO WHAT YOU CAN. I'LL REMAIN ON PATROL AND TAKE A SWING AROUND THE AREA.

AS YOU ORDER, CAPTAIN.

AGRA BACK-TRACKED TO WHERE THE COLUMN THREADED ITS WAY OVER THE JUNGLE TRAILS. OSBORNE GREETED HIM RUDELY...

IS THIS ANOTHER OF YOUR STUPID JOKES, LIEUTENANT? WHY DIDN'T CAPTAIN GRANT REPORT THIS TO ME HIMSELF?

HE HOPES TO LAUNCH A FLANK ATTACK IF THE ENEMY ARE NEAR, PLEASE, MAJOR...



## No Higher Stakes

THE BLAST OF GUNFIRE CUT SHORT HIS WORDS. SUDDENLY, THE JUNGLE WAS ALIVE WITH SCREAMING JAPANESE.

DEATH  
TO THE ENGLISH  
DOGS!

KILL!  
KILL!

FORWARD!  
KILL FOR  
THE GLORY OF  
THE EMPEROR!  
BANZAI!

DESPERATELY, THE SHATTERED COLUMN FOUGHT BACK. THE SNARL OF GUNS RESOUNDED AMONG THE TREES.

GET  
THE YELLOW  
DEVILS!

GOOD  
GRIEF! THEY'RE  
EVERYWHERE!



THE SCATTERED FUSILLADE FROM THE BRITISH  
COULD NOT STEM THAT FRENZIED ASSAULT...  
MAJOR KONDO SCREAMED AN OMINOUS ORDER...

THE OFFICERS  
ARE TO BE TAKEN  
ALIVE! DO NOT  
KILL THE  
OFFICERS!



OSBORNE FOUGHT LIKE A MAN  
POSSESSED ~ POSSESSED OF  
A TERROR OF SOMETHING  
WORSE THAN DEATH.

THEY'LL TAKE THE  
OFFICERS ALIVE ~ AND  
TORTURE US FOR  
INFORMATION. I CAN'T  
FACE IT ~ I CAN'T LET  
THEM DO THAT TO  
ME!



## No Higher Stakes

THE STUTTER OF HIS STEN DIED AS THE MAGAZINE EMPTIED AND HE PREPARED TO SELL HIS LIFE DEARLY.

ENGLISH  
DOG! PUT  
DOWN YOUR  
GUN!



WITH THE DESPERATION OF A CORNERED BEAST, OSBORNE FLUNG HIMSELF AT THE JAPANESE SOLDIER.

I CAN USE  
THAT RIFLE!



## No Higher Stakes

35

HE LUNGED FOR THE RIFLE BUT A STRAY BULLET RICOCHETED FROM A TREE STUMP CLOSE BY AND HIT HIM A GLANCING BLOW.



OSBORNE CLIMBED GROGGILY TO HIS FEET. THE FIRING HAD DIED, THE BATTLE WAS OVER, THE ENTIRE COLUMN DEAD OR TAKEN PRISONER.

YOU THERE!  
ALL PRISONERS  
THIS WAY. YOU BE  
QUICK OR YOU  
DIE!



## No Higher Stakes

SICK WITH TERROR AT WHAT HE DREADED MOST, MAJOR OSBORNE SNATCHED AT THE INSIGNIA OF RANK ON HIS EPAULETTES.

W-WITHOUT THESE THEY WON'T KNOW I'M AN OFFICER. THAT WAY I'LL BE TREATED LIKE THE REST OF THE MEN.



THROWING THE CROWNS INTO THE MUD, OSBORNE JOINED THE OTHERS. KONDO GLARED AT HIS PRISONERS THROUGH NARROWED EYES.

YOU ARE ALL PRISONERS OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AND ARE ALL SUBJECT TO THE DISCIPLINE OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY. OBEY AND YOU WILL BE WELL TREATED. WHO IS YOUR OFFICER?

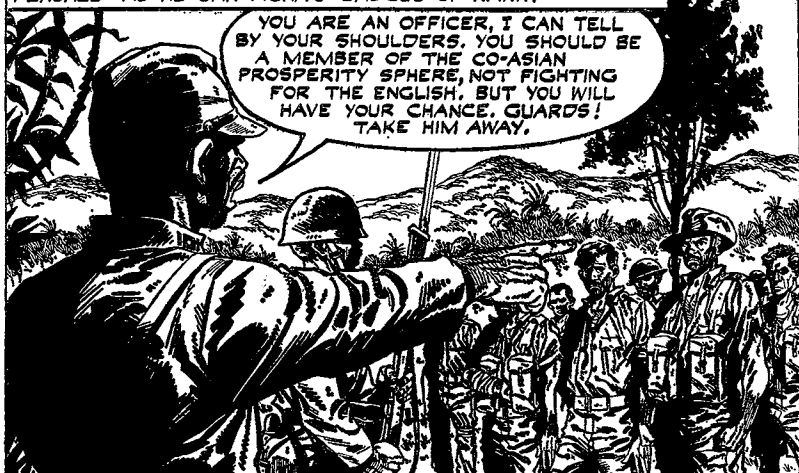
LOOK AT THE MAJOR...

SHUT UP!



## No Higher Stakes

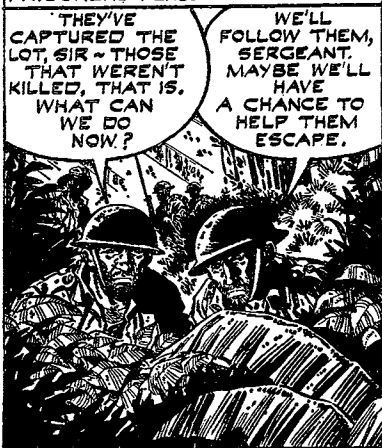
COLDLY KONDO GLARED AT THE SILENT MEN, THEN HIS EYES FLASHED AS HE SAW AGRA'S BADGES OF RANK.



KICKED AND BEATEN WITH RIFLE BUTTS, THE DEJECTED PRISONERS WERE LED AWAY. BUT THE PAIN OF THE BLOWS WAS NOTHING TO THE TORMENT IN OSBORNE'S MIND.



DEEP IN THE JUNGLE, CAPTAIN GRANT WATCHED WITH BLEAK EYES AS HIS COMRADES WERE MARCHED AWAY TOWARDS THE PRISONERS' PENS.



## No Higher Stakes

IT WAS A THIN HOPE WHICH ALMOST DIED WHEN THEY SAW THE PRISONERS' PENS, BUT GRANT WAS DETERMINED.



AS GRANT SLID TO THE GROUND, AN EAGER-EYED GHURKA STEPPED TOWARDS HIM. . .



## No Higher Stakes

SERGEANT WEST SLOWLY SHOOK HIS HEAD WHEN GRANT EXPLAINED HIS PLAN.

REMAIN HIDDEN UNTIL NIGHT, THEN WE GO IN, KILL THE GUARDS AND FREE AND ARM THE PRISONERS. IT'S TAKING A BIG CHANCE, SIR.

WE'VE NO CHOICE, SERGEANT. UNLESS WE WIPE OUT THOSE JAPS, WE'LL JOIN THE REST IN THOSE CAGES.

SUDDENLY THE SERGEANT GRINNED, WHITE TEETH FLASHING IN HIS TANNED FACE.

WELL, IT'D BE A GOOD SCRAP, SIR.

SOMETHING COMING THIS WAY, SIR!

DROP AND FREEZE! FAST!

MELTING INTO THE UNDERGROWTH, THE PATROL FROZE AS A LINE OF JAPANESE INFANTRYMEN PASSED A FEW YARDS AWAY.

PHEW, THAT WAS CLOSE! THIS AREA IS ALIVE WITH THE DEVILS. I WISH AGRA WAS WITH US NOW... WE COULD USE HIM.



## No Higher Stakes

AT THAT MOMENT, THE GHURKA OFFICER WAS EXPERIENCING SOME OF THE FAMED JAPANESE 'POLITENESS'.

YOU ARE FOOLISH TO REMAIN SILENT. WHAT ARE THESE ENGLISH DOGS TO YOU? COME NOW, THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO TALK.

YELLOW PIG! YOU WASTE YOUR BREATH!

ANGER SPARKED IN KONDO'S EYES AND HE WATCHED WITH SMOULDERING EYES AS AGRA WAS DRAGGED AWAY.

IT IS NOT PERMITTED THAT THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY LOSE FACE BEFORE THE ENEMY, THIS MAN MUST TALK... YOU UNDERSTAND?

HE WILL TALK, HONOURABLE SIR, I HAVE MADE MANY MEN LIKE HIM EAGER TO TELL BEFORE I HAVE DONE.



## No Higher Stakes

41

CONFINED IN THE BAMBOO CAGE, OSBORNE WATCHED IN HORROR AS THE GHURKA OFFICER WAS BEATEN. AT LAST, HE COULD ENDURE IT NO LONGER.

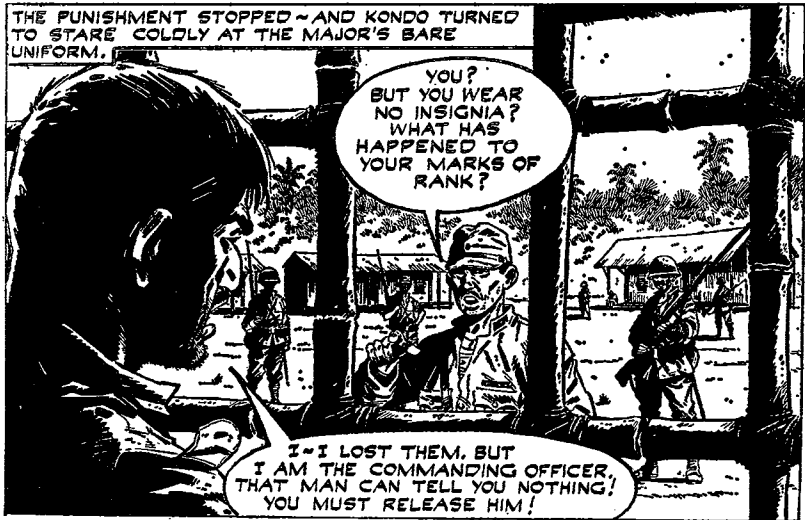
STOP IT, YOU FIENDS!  
THAT MAN WAS NOT IN  
COMMAND OF THE COLUMN~  
I WAS! I'M THE MAN  
YOU WANT!



THE PUNISHMENT STOPPED~AND KONDO TURNED TO STARE COLDLY AT THE MAJOR'S BARE UNIFORM.

YOU?  
BUT YOU WEAR  
NO INSIGNIA?  
WHAT HAS  
HAPPENED TO  
YOUR MARKS OF  
RANK?

I-I LOST THEM, BUT  
I AM THE COMMANDING OFFICER,  
THAT MAN CAN TELL YOU NOTHING!  
YOU MUST RELEASE HIM!



## No Higher Stakes

MINUTES LATER, OSSBORNE STOOD BEFORE THE HARD-EYED JAPANESE, KONDO, WHO MOCKED HIM. . .

WE ARE HONOURED,  
MAJOR OSSBORNE, TONIGHT  
YOU MAY REST. . .  
TOMORROW, YOU WILL HAVE  
MUCH TO TELL  
US.

...AND  
THE GHURKA,  
HONOURABLE  
SIR?

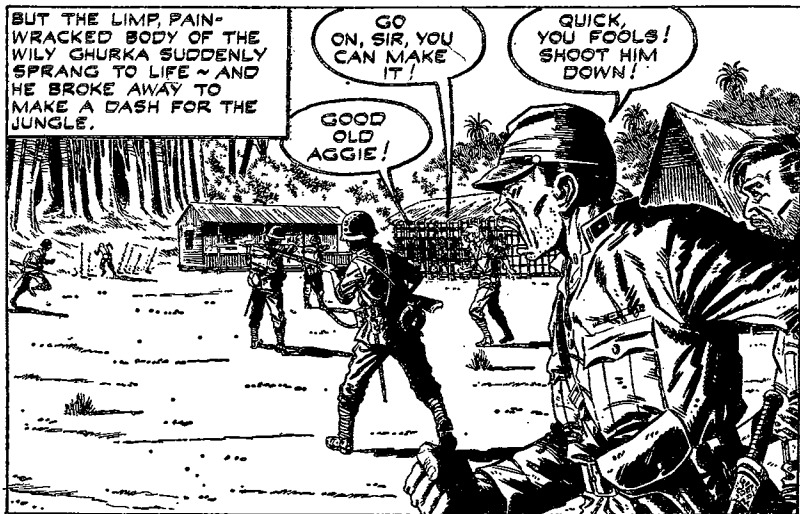
THROW  
HIM IN WITH  
THE OTHERS ~  
HE SEEMS  
CLOSE  
TO DEATH,  
ANYWAY!

BUT THE LIMP, PAIN-  
WRACKED BODY OF THE  
WILY GHURKA SUDDENLY  
SPRANG TO LIFE ~ AND  
HE BROKE AWAY TO  
MAKE A DASH FOR THE  
JUNGLE.

GO  
ON, SIR, YOU  
CAN MAKE  
IT!

QUICK,  
YOU FOOLS!  
SHOOT HIM  
DOWN!

GOOD  
OLD  
AGGIE!



## No Higher Stakes

43

DODGING, WEAVING THROUGH A HAIL OF BULLETS, THE GHURKA RACED TOWARDS THE UNSEEN WATCHER AHEAD.

GOOD GRIEF! IT'S AGRA! HE'S BRINGING A MOB OF JAPS AFTER HIM, TOO! I'LL HAVE TO TAKE A HAND OR THEY'LL GET HIM FOR SURE!



IRONICALLY, THE GHURKA OFFICER WAS LEADING HIS PURSUERS TO THE VERY MAN WHO HAD PLANNED TO RESCUE HIM. . .

CAPTAIN GRANT! BUT...

TAKE COVER, YOU IDIOT! YOU'RE RIGHT IN THE LINE OF FIRE!



## No Higher Stakes.

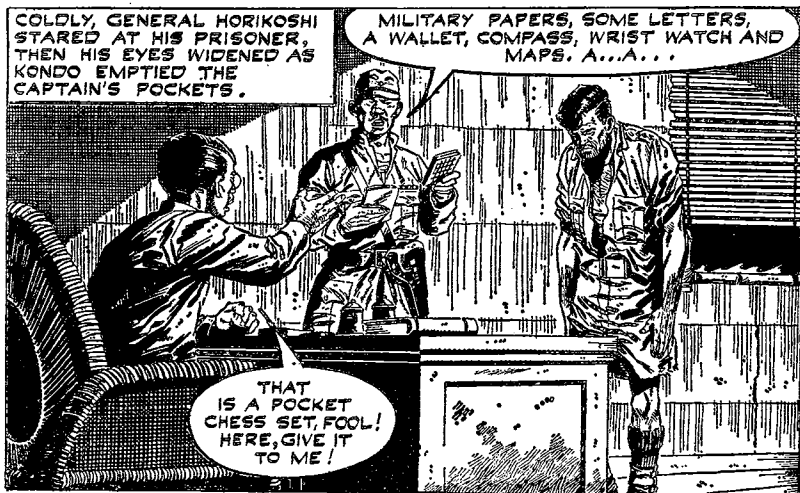
HASTILY AGRA FLUNG HIMSELF ASIDE AS GRANT GREETED THE JAPANESE WITH A SCYTHING HAIL OF LEAD FROM HIS TOMMY GUN.



BUT GRANT CURTLY ORDERED HIM TO KEEP MOVING. . .



# Chapter 3. Checkmate!



## No Higher Stakes

EYES GLEAMING, THE GENERAL STARED AT THE PIECES SET ON THE BOARD.

THE MIKALOV GAMBIT WITH SPARSKI'S ADAPTION! KONDO! THIS MAN PLAYS CHESS! SEE THAT HE RECEIVES FOOD, MEDICAL ATTENTION, STIMULANTS! I WANT HIM HERE, FULLY FIT, IN AN HOUR.



AS ORDERLIES WORKED OVER THE BRUISED CAPTAIN, MAJOR OSBORNE STARED FROM HIS PRISON WITH BLEAK DESPAIR.

THAT WAS GRANT THEY BROUGHT IN. AGRA MUST HAVE BEEN KILLED. ALL MY COMMAND LOST BECAUSE I REFUSED TO LISTEN TO ADVICE. EVEN THE JAPS THINK I'M A COWARD.



## No Higher Stakes

47

LIKE A CAGED ANIMAL, THE MAJOR PACED HIS PRISON, AND DESPERATION GLINTED IN HIS EYES.

IF THAT SENTRY  
COMES A LITTLE CLOSER,  
I COULD KNOCK HIM OUT AND  
USE HIS BAYONET TO CUT  
MY WAY OUT. MAYBE  
I COULD FREE THE  
OTHERS.



MEANWHILE, LIEUTENANT AGRA CROUCHED IN THE JUNGLE DARKNESS, KEEN EYES PEERING TOWARDS THE JAPANESE STRONGHOLD.

SOON IT WILL BE TIME FOR  
US TO MOVE, SERGEANT. I FEEL  
A STRANGE THING IN MY BLOOD...  
SURELY THE FATES WILL GUIDE  
US THIS NIGHT.

YOU'RE A  
SUPERSTITIOUS CUSS...  
BEGGING YOUR PARDON,  
SIR. THIS WAITING IS  
GETTING ON MY  
NERVES!



## No Higher Stakes

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NERVES!

## No Higher Stakes

HORIKOSHI ALSO FOUND THE WAITING HARD AS KONDO LEARNED TO HIS COST. SULLENLY, HE LISTENED TO HIS GENERAL. . .

WHERE IS THE ENGLISHMAN? I GAVE YOU AN HOUR AND IT IS ALMOST THREE TIMES THAT!

HE IS ALMOST READY. BUT, GENERAL SAN, YOU ARE TOO GRACIOUS TO A MERE PRISONER.

FIRE BLAZED IN HORIKOSHI'S EYES.

HE KNOWS CHESS WELL. HE WILL GIVE ME THE ENJOYMENT OF ONE GAME, KONDO... SOMETHING YOU COULD NEVER DO IF YOU TRIED FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

BUT... BUT WILL HE AGREE TO PLAY?

HORIKOSHI HAD NO DOUBT THAT HE KNEW HOW TO MAKE THE ENGLISHMAN PLAY...AND PLAY WELL.

IF YOU WIN, CAPTAIN, I SHALL SPARE YOUR LIFE, IF YOU LOSE, THEN YOU WILL DIE... SLOWLY!

IS THAT THE WAY A SAMURAI MAKES A WAGER? DOES HE ONLY BET WHEN HE CANNOT LOSE?

INSOLENT DOG!

## No Higher Stakes.

49

CURTLY, HORIKOSHI  
GESTURED THE MAJOR  
TO SILENCE.

YOU PRIDE YOURSELF ON  
YOUR HONOUR. IF I AM TO PLAY  
WITH MY LIFE AS THE STAKE,  
CAN YOU, AS A SAMURAI,  
DO LESS?

VERY WELL, IT SHALL  
BE A GAME OF LIFE... AND  
DEATH! KONDO! SEE TO IT  
THAT WE ARE NOT  
DISTURBED.



GRIMLY, THEY SAT DOWN AT THE BOARD, GRANT  
TRYING TO IGNORE THE SWEAT BEADING HIS  
FOREHEAD, THE QUIVERING OF HIS HANDS.

PERHAPS  
I SHOULD WARN  
YOU, CAPTAIN,  
THAT I HAVE  
NEVER LOST  
A GAME IN MY  
LIFE.

BUT  
YOU HAVE  
NEVER PLAYED  
FOR SUCH  
HIGH STAKES,  
GENERAL.



## No Higher Stakes

MEANWHILE, IN THE DARKNESS OUTSIDE, MAJOR OSBORNE WAS ABOUT TO SNATCH AT THE CHANCE FOR WHICH HE HAD WAITED. . .

THE GUARD'S DOZING. HE'S NEAR ENOUGH, BY HEAVENS! IT'S NOW OR NEVER!



OSBORNE MOVED THEN ~ FAST. IN A MOMENT, IT WAS OVER. . .

SO FAR, SO GOOD! NOW I'VE GOT TO TRY AND FREE THE PRISONERS... I OWE THE POOR DEVILS THAT MUCH, AT LEAST.



SWEATING WITH EXERTION, HIS SKIN CRAWLING TO THE EXPECTED IMPACT OF A BULLET, OSBORNE REACHED A PRISONERS' CAGE.

HERE ~ TAKE HOLD OF THIS AND TRY TO CUT YOURSELF OUT. QUICKLY NOW!

WATCH IT, SIR! THE SENTRIES ARE ABOUT DUE ROUND!



## No Higher Stakes

51

THE SOFT PAD OF FOOTSTEPS WARNED THE MAJOR OF THE APPROACHING GUARDS AND HE TOOK TO HIS HEELS.



TURNING, THE MAJOR LEVELLED THE UNFAMILIAR RIFLE, FINGER CLOSING ON THE TRIGGER AS HE FIRED AT THE GUARDS. THEN THE JAPANESE BULLETS SEARED TOWARDS HIM.

AAAH!



## No Higher Stakes



## No Higher Stakes

53



## No Higher Stakes

THE CORPORAL TURNED AT BAY, TOMMY GUN, HAMMERING DEFIANTLY, STRIVING IN VAIN TO HOLD OFF THE ENEMY....

THIS WRECKS THE PLAN — THE SARGE WAS RELYING ON THE PRISONERS TO BACK HIM UP. WITHOUT THEM, WE'LL ALL BE SITTING TARGETS.



BUT WITHIN THE CAGE, THE PRISONERS WERE SLASHING THE ROPES WITH THE BAYONET OSBORNE HAD GIVEN THEM JUST BEFORE HE DIED.

RIGHT, LADS. NOW— OUT AND AT 'EM!

JUST REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO THE MAJOR!



IN A SUDDEN WAVE OF UNLEASHED FURY, THE PRISONERS BURST FROM THE CAGE AND FLUNG THEMSELVES ON THE GUARDS...

WHERE'S THE REST OF THE SWINE P

COME ON, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR P

YOU CAN'T FIGHT WITHOUT GUNS. FOLLOW ME AND LET'S GET BACK IN THE WAR.





UNEASY IN THE PRE-DAWN DARKNESS, MAJOR KONDO SNARLED VICIOUSLY AS A FRIGHTENED ORDERLY BROUGHT HIM THE NEWS...

A FEW PRISONERS AND A FEW STOLEN ARMS! CRUSH THEM! HAVE NO MERCY ON THE WHITE DOGS. KILL THEM ALL!

YES, HONOURABLE SIR. SHOULD THE GENERAL BE INFORMED?

SCOWLING, THE MAJOR DISMISSED THE SUGGESTION. AS THE SOUND OF SHOTS ECHOED THROUGH THE AIR HE RAPPED OUT FRESH ORDERS.

SUMMON REINFORCEMENTS FROM THE SOLDIERS' CAMP. DOUBLE THE GUARD ON THE ARSENAL! HURRY, NOW! I WANT THOSE PRISONERS DEAD BEFORE DAWN!

IT SHALL BE AS YOU ORDER, HONOURABLE SIR.

## No Higher Stakes

CRUSHING THE OUTBREAK SHOULD HAVE BEEN A ROUTINE MATTER BUT MAJOR KONDO WAS UNEASY.

THE GENERAL OUGHT TO BE INFORMED BUT I DARE NOT INTERRUPT HIM. SHINTO NEVER HAVE I KNOWN A GAME TO TAKE HIM SO LONG!



SWEAT GLISTENED ON GENERAL HORIKOSHI'S THIN FACE AS HE STARED AT THE CHESSBOARD WHERE GRANT WAS COOLLY LIFTING A PIECE.

I TAKE YOUR KNIGHT, GENERAL.

THE DEVIL! HE IS BREAKING FROM MY TRAP!



FOR A LONG TIME HORIKOSHI STUDIED THE PIECES, THEN HE GRUNTED CONFIDENTLY AS HIS YELLOW HAND MOVED A CARVED IVORY SHAPE...

THERE! YOU HAVE OVER-REACHED YOURSELF, CAPTAIN. MY STRENGTH IS GREATER THAN YOURS!

STRENGTH IS USELESS IF IT CANNOT BE USED, GENERAL. I INTERCEPT YOUR PIECE... SO IT IS YOUR MOVE AGAIN.





## No Higher Stakes



## No Higher Stakes

59

SMASHING OPEN THE HUT DOOR, WEST STARED AT THE WEAPONS HEAPED INSIDE.

IT'LL BE DAWN SOON, SARGE.

WHERE THE HECK ARE THOSE PRISONERS? WE'VE GOT TO GET 'EM ARMED BEFORE DAWN OR THE MAIN BODY OF GUARDS WILL SMASH US!



EVEN AS THE BIG SERGEANT VOICED THE QUESTION AGRA CAME RUNNING FORWARD, HIS MEN LEADING THE EAGER PRISONERS.

STAND ON GUARD WHILE WE ARM THE OTHERS. THIS WAY, LIEUTENANT!



## No Higher Stakes





## No Higher Stakes

DAWN WAS LIGHTENING THE SKY WHEN THE ESCAPED PRISONERS SAW THE ENEMY ADVANCING TOWARDS THEM. JAW SET GRIMLY, SERGEANT WEST LOOKED AROUND HIM...

THIS IS IT, LADS!  
SAFETY CATCHES OFF—  
STAY BEHIND COVER—  
UNTIL YOU CAN'T MISS—  
AND THEN LET  
THEM HAVE IT!

IT'S THEM  
OR US AND  
IT'S NOT  
GOING TO  
BE US!

THE JAPANESE RACED  
FORWARD—STRAIGHT  
INTO A SCYTHING HAIL  
OF LEAD.

KEEP DOWN AND KEEP  
FIRING! COME ON, LADS, GIVE  
THE DEVILS EVERYTHING  
YOU'VE GOT!

WIPE  
OUT THE  
SCUM!

NOW  
IT'S OUR  
TURN!



## No Higher Stakes

63

IN THE GENERAL'S HUT, GRANT TENSED AS THE HAMMER OF GUNS FILLED THE AIR AGAIN. HE COULD ONLY HAZARD A GUESS AT WHAT WAS HAPPENING. HE FORCED HIMSELF TO RELAX AS HORIKOSHI MOVED A PIECE...

CHESS IS A WONDERFUL GAME, CAPTAIN. A GAME OF COLD LOGIC UNCONTAMINATED BY STUPID EMOTION.

PERHAPS, GENERAL, BUT SOMETIMES A HIGH STAKE HELPS GOOD PLAY. IS THAT YOUR MOVE?



HORIKOSHI NODDED AND GRANT DREW IN A DEEP BREATH. GENTLY HE MOVED A PIECE, THE IVORY RAPPING AS IT CHANGED POSITION ON THE BOARD...

THEN THE GAME IS ENDED, GENERAL.  
**CHECKMATE!**

I...I...



## No Higher Stakes

SLOWLY, HORIKOSHI ROSE TO HIS FEET. HIS FACE AS HARD AND AS COLD AS THE IVORY OF THE CHESSMEN.

WE HAD A WAGER, GENERAL... OR DOES A SAMURAI FORGET SUCH WAGERS WHEN HE LOSES?

HE DOES NOT FORGET, CAPTAIN GRANT. I THANK YOU FOR AN INTERESTING GAME... YOU ARE A MASTER. GO NOW... AND PERMIT ME TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE!

DOWN IN THE BATTLE AREA, SERGEANT WEST RAMMED A FRESH CLIP IN HIS TOMMY GUN AND WAVED TO A GROUP OF MEN.

THIS LOT'S FINISHED. I WANT SOME VOLUNTEERS TO HELP ME RESCUE THE CAPTAIN!

RESCUE— OR REVENGE, SARGE?

BOTH, CHUM. I'M WITH YOU, SARGE!





## No Higher Stakes

BUT GRANT WAS RIGHT, HORIKOSHI HAD PAID HIS WAGER. DRIVEN BY HIS STERN CODE OF SAMURAI HONOUR HE WOULD TROUBLE THE ALLIES NO MORE.



HE WAS DEAD AND HIS KEEN, LOGICAL MIND HAD DIED WITH HIM. WHEN THE ALLIES SMASHED BACK INTO BURMA THEY WOULD HAVE NO CHESS-PLAYING MASTER OF WAR TO COUNTER THEIR EVERY MOVE — AND THEN THE JAPANESE WOULD TASTE FINAL DEFEAT.

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